

In North Carolina the most rewarding records, genealogically speaking, are the county records. Therefore, you must know in which county(ies) your ancestor resided. In some instances, you may be able to determine his county of residence by using the federal census schedules, some of which have been indexed. Beginning in 1850, all people who appear on federal census schedules are enumerated by name. Between the first federal census in 1790 and 1840, only heads of household are named; other people in the household are denoted by age group and sex only. Read and record all the censuses systematically—you may find a parent, parent-in-law, second wife, additional children, as well as approximate migration dates and additional places of residence.

The Genealogical Services Branch has microfilm census records for approximately thirty states, together with such indexes as have been published. If you wish to search these census records before making a trip to Raleigh, they may be *rented* through your local library from the *National Archives Census Microfilm Rental Program*.

The clue to the North Carolina county in which your ancestor lived may be in the records of his or her next county of residence. Before researching your North Carolina ancestor, be sure to search exhaustively the records of the county into which he or she migrated. Determine from land transactions, tax lists, census, etc. the date at which he first appears in that county. Notice if he came alone or with other people of that surname. Remember: his parent(s) could have migrated with him.

When you determine the North Carolina county in which your ancestor resided, search the county records—wills, inventories of estates, records of guardianships, marriages, deeds, tax records, court minutes, etc. In the absence of vital records, proof of parentage is most commonly found in the probate of the parent(s)' estate; therefore, examine *all* probate records for the surname which you are researching. Other local county records mentioned above may also help to establish parentage. The Genealogical Services Branch has published abstracts of some of the county records—original or microfilm records are in the State Archives Search Room. When available, published abstracts are consulted first for two reasons: they are printed, not handwritten, and frequently every name is indexed.

The State Library has histories of many North Carolina counties. They are useful to the genealogist for general historical information on the county. Information on specific families is often minimal and sometimes inaccurate.

After each search, review your new material. Does it solve a particular problem, offer clues toward a solution, eliminate someone, make previous information suspect? Then decide what you want to know next and plan your research for the next time.